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VIRGINIA

A Tragedy

AND OTHER POEMS



MARION FORSTER GILMORE



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VIRGINIA

A Tragedy

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

MARION FORSTER GILMORE



JOHN P. MORTON & COMPANY
Incorporated

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

1910

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Dedication



TO MY FATHER

Years can not cloud the light of your clear eyes,
Steadfast and bright with high integrity;
Nor rob your spirit of the strength that lies
On those firm lips; nor dim the purity
Of a high soul, which bears the shield of Love
Untarnished, as it was upon the day
When One, with tender faith, desired to prove
Her "Royal Knight," and gave her heart away.
Bear her bright shield, and smile, as years roll by—
Years that have crowned you with the priceless crown
Of steadfast faith and worldwide charity—
Until you reap the joy that you have sown,
In that near land, where, with a light divine,
The eyes you love through all the ages shine.

[Thanks are due to the proprietors of The Cosmopolitan Magazine and Leslie's Weekly, for their courtesy in allowing the republication herein of a number of poems which have previously appeared in issues of their copyrighted magazines.]

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VIRGINIA

A Tragedy

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY



APPIUS CLAUDIUS,
Chief of the Ten and lawgiver of the Romans.

MARCUS CLAUDIUS,
His client.

OPPIUS,
One of the Ten.

VIRGINIUS,
A Roman centurion; a plebeian.

ICILIUS,
A tribune of the commons and lover to Virginia.

SICINIUS,
A plebeian soldier and an enemy of the Decemvirs.

HORATIUS,
GALBA,
MARIUS,
HORTENSIUS,
Four Roman citizens.

TIBERIUS,
A boy of noble birth; brother to Cornelia.

THE TEN DECENVIRS.

A PORTER.



VIRGINIA,
Daughter of Virginius.

CORNELIA,
A patrician lady, secretly betrothed to Sicinius.

CAMILLA,
Nurse to Virginia.

JULIA,
A maid.

A SIBYL.

A SLAVE GIRL IN THE HOUSE OF APPIUS CLAUDIUS.

SOLDIERS, LICTORS, WOMEN, RABBLE, AND SERFS.

Setting—Rome. Time—During Supremacy of the Decemvirs.

ACT I—Scene I—The Forum. Scene II—A Street in Rome.

ACT II—Scene I—The House of Appius. Scene II—Women's Apartments
in the House of Virginius. Scene III—Garden in House of Virginius.
Scene IV—Home of Cornelia.

ACT III—Scene I—The Forum. Scene II—Home of Virginius. Scene III—
The Forum.

VIRGINIA

A Tragedy



ACT I.

SCENE I—THE FORUM.

A multitude of citizens gathered therein. Disturbance shown among them by sullen looks and murmurings. Four citizens, two in patrician and two in plebeian garments, confer together.

1st Cit. Enough, enough! I see we all agree
Upon this common cause of our grievance;
Our ranks, our unmixed blood, our differences,
Are all forgotten—nay, methinks they shall
In time together mingle when our blood
Shall be poured forth in this most righteous cause.

2nd Cit. As ever art thou eloquent, O Marius,
And just; Brutus himself were not more so.
Patrician and plebeian, equalized
By common woe, together whisper menace
To those who work such havoc as, indeed,
Was never known in Rome until to-day.

3rd Cit. Ye two are nobles; we, the commons are;
Yet all are leveled by the grief we feel
For Rome, our mother city, who so low
Hath fall'n. Hark! the multitude itself
Is wroth as we, yet, e'en as we, it lacks
The courage needful for this fierce occasion.

VIRGINIA

4th Cit. Ay, list indeed! Mark how the murmur swells!

[*They turn, and follow with their eyes the gaze of the Roman mob.*]

Voices of lictors (*without*). Make way, ye Romans, way for the noble Ten!

3rd Cit. Pah! they announce them like to royal kings!

1st Cit. Tyrants are ceremonious to the letter.

Multitude. All hail to the lawgivers! Life and peace Unto the Ten!

2nd Cit. Jove's lightning strike them down,
The turncoats! Ah, the cowards and the curs!
Perfidious gang of fawners! Do they thus
Forget their wrongs in the wrongdoer's presence,
Or veil them with that slime, false loyalty?

[*Enter the Ten Decemvirs, each preceded by twelve lictors armed with fasces.*]

4th Cit. Lo! the presumption! How each lictor bears
Amongst his rods an axe to indicate
That life and death lie in his master's word.
Once was each tyrant pleased with one attendant
The way to clear—now must they number twelve.

[*The Decemvirs pause a space, the while their leader, Appius Claudius, addresses the assembled citizens.*]

Appius. Ye Roman citizens! Unto our ears
Murmurings hath arrived laden with strife;
And though this day ye have protested loud
Your loyalty, and hailed us with acclaim,
Ye seem but ill-content. This must not be.
We have been lenient to every class—
What ye demand in reason ye receive.
Ye called for written laws, and lo! they hang

VIRGINIA

Within the Forum that all eyes may read.
Yet, mark ye! Read not only, but obey,
Else blood shall pour in torrents on these stones.

[*Low, angry murmur.*

What! would ye show your teeth, ye nobles brave,
Would bare your fangs, O ye plebeian dogs!
Your teeth are drawn, patricians, and your fangs
Are dull, indeed, ye curs! [*A hissing protest.*

What, open schism?

Ho, lictors, strike! Ah! would ye calmer grow?

Lictors, enough! Now must we on. Our time

Is pressing. [*As he is on the point of departing with
his colleagues, his gaze is arrested by
the passing of a girl, clad all in white,
attended by her nurse, through the
Forum.*

(*To a companion.*) Now, by the ghost of Ixion, behold
Yon perfect vision of most perfect beauty.

Enchanting grace! Exquisite featurings!

Youth lightly shadowed by young womanhood!

My passions, Oppius, are all awake,

Aflame and spreading fast! Why, I would burn

All Rome to own her, touch her, feel her near;

I would receive the curses of the gods,

Be hurled to lowest Hades, and endure

The tortures set for Tantalus himself

If I might call her mine. Her kiss would prove

Sufficient food for me, her liquid eyes

Would quench my thirst if I should look within

And see the tears or draw the starry light

Into my soul! O, Appius, ye are stricken!

Oppius. Peace, peace, mine Appius, the maid is
gone—

VIRGINIA

Thy looks are wild, thy features are convulsed
With passion.

1st Cit. See, Hortensius, yon man?
What ails him? Like a madman is his gaze,
And horrid is his flaming countenance.

Oppius. Come, brother, come, my colleague, let's
away.

Appius. Hands off, O, foolish man, for I am dead
To protest. I have been by lightning stricken.

Oppius. It is, indeed, too passionate to be
The wound from Eros' feathered shaft.

Appius (groaning). Ah! God!
Where has she gone? I can not see her face
Nor matchless form within the dreary crowd.
Women I spy in plenty. What a mob
Of uncouth shapes and homely featuring
These females are! She was a Cynthia,
And all beside her, hideous and bold
Bacchantes. I'll a licitor straight despatch,
To seize on her, for she belongs to me.

Oppius. Nay, fool! Rash fool! Thou art not
Jupiter
In power, that thou darest thus to seize,
In open daylight, objects of thy lust,
When they are daughters of free citizens.
Some shadow of excuse must herald such
Bold actions, lest the rabble rise in arms,
As in the days of fair Lucretia!
Thou canst presume, and yet in thy presumption
Play the sly part of virtue, ay, and justice,
Nor seem a mad and bigoted abductor.
I know the maid; a blameless child of one
Virginus, a soldier and a pleb.
Wait, wait, and on the morrow form thy plans,

VIRGINIA

But for this moment let the matter rest,
If thou art prudent. Come, let's on; the mob
Follows thy gaze, noting thy steadfast look.

Appius. Speed morrow then. For I am now no
better

Than madman; I, who hold the whole of Rome
Under my thumb, am raving only for
Nor heaven nor earth, nor power, nay, nor fame,
But for the captivation of a maid—
But for Virginia. Onward, let us on!
I'll march into the grim, gray gates of eve
And meet the morrow ere it hath arisen,
Tear down the portals of the night and force
My way into the chamber where the morn
Dozes, a lovely slothful soul of hope,
And seizing on her, madly I'll demand
Virginia!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II—A STREET IN ROME.

Enter Marius and Horatius, two patricians.

Marius. He dared! he dared! he dared!

Horatius. And will dare more,
Until Rome wakens from her lethargy
And is herself again.

Marius. Till then we wait,
Enduring insult, tyranny, from him,
The common enemy of nobleman
And pleb.

Horatius. Alas! once was he common friend
To both—our lawgiver; what changed him so?

Marius. A worm of pride that gnawed into his heart,
A blast of fiery desert wind that dried,

VIRGINIA

Withered and seared his noble disposition.
To-day he is a monster, where he was
But yesterday a leader and a god.

Horatius. He angered the patricians by his show
Of democratic policy; the plebs
By barring intermarriage 'twixt the two
Opposing classes! [*Enter Virginius and Icilius.*]

Virginius. Blessings, health to you!
Good wishes of a Roman unto Romans.

Horatius (bitterly). Say rather, helpless, sullen,
brooding curs!

We are no more—methinks *thou* art no more;
Nor even thou, Icilius, our tribune.
There are no free, courageous sons of Rome,
But victims only, cowed beneath the lash
Of the Decemvirs—curses on their heads!

Virginius. Methinks I'm not the dog that thou
hast said,
For 'tis my part and wish to play the man.
The name of Appius I do despise,
And only bide my time to bury it
Deep in the soil, along with him who bears
Its weight. Although I will not fling myself
Upon the altar of Unreason as
A bootless sacrifice, yet am I still
Nor dog, nor worm, but one who waits and prays,
Nor prays alone, but puzzles out his plan
Of action. No, nor plans alone, but strives;
And striving, must achieve, unless the hand
Of sudden Death come in to tear the web.
Friends, we are hard pressed and we pant in pain,
Yet tyrants, howsoever strong, are still
Weaker than Justice and are shorter-lived

VIRGINIA

Than Liberty, the queen whom Justice serves.
Because our wrongs are heavy must we brood,
And chafe, and curse our stars and Appius?
What war was ever closed successfully
With sullen warriors and men untrained,
Unready or undone by foul Despair?

Icilius. Thou hast inspired me and curbed my wrath,
Which held in it no reason, all unbound,
Ready to leap a lion on its prey.
Ay, there's a time for all things. I shall wait,
Knowing, Virginius, that thy words are true.
Wisdom, the gods be thanked, hath never flowed
Forth from thy lips in words of honeyed sounds,
Nor yet in pompous phrases burdened down
With ponderous eloquence, but bold and frank,
Shining as bright and ringing forth as true
As thy good sword that thou hast borne so well
In camp, palestra, or in battle-field.

Virginius. My words are bold, for I am full of grief
At men's delinquency and heavy souls;
Frank—ay; because 'tis late to talk in riddles
Or metaphors, that veil the precious truth
Within; shining with fervor, ringing true,
Because the cause I do uphold is true
As life and death is real.

Horatius. Thine eloquence
Is worthy of a better hearing than
This little company. I would that thou
Wouldst lead us into action, noble pleb.

Virginius. My duties are at present with mine own—
With her, my fair ewe-lamb; when she becomes
The spouse of this our friend and our tribune,
Virginius shall owe himself to none,
But feel compelled the Commonwealth alone

VIRGINIA

To serve. And here's my hand in oath that I
Shall serve it well! The gods help Appius!

[*Enter Sicinius, in civilian garments.*]

Marius. Greetings, Sicinius, and health to thee!

Sic. And Heaven's favor unto you, my friends.
How now! All deep in sombre conference?

Icilius (impetuously). Sicinius! What curse hath
come to Rome,

That bends her proud and regal head beneath
The yoke of shame? The collar of the serf
Hangs heavy round her haughty neck. Ye gods!
The mighty Romulus, methinks, must find
The grave a cell that keeps him from his Rome;
How must his mighty spirit chafe when he
Receiveth tidings from the newly dead,
Concerning this, his city, now so low
Amid the dust of Wrong and Bigotry!
Tell us, thou man of action, what bold move
We needs must make. Oh! be our *Ædipus*!

Horatius. Hist, noble tribune! Favor silence. These
Are times of peril; cast thou Caution's die.

Icilius (amazed). What! knowest thou not this man,
Sicinius?

He who has bearded all the noble Ten,
He whose brave words of indignation ring
From hill to hill of Rome? Sicinius!

Horatius (sullenly). I have been absent from the
town these twelve
Long moons, nor know I all that thou dost know.

Icilius. Why, man, look not so sour and so sad.

Virginius. Peace, youths! Sicinius hath but little
chance

To speak his mind. I beg of thee that thou,

VIRGINIA

Good friend, expound thy views as to these days
Of tyranny, for Romans are at bay.

Sic. If I should speak, then would I speak myself
Into my grave; so twist mine earnest tongue
As soon would wring it from its fevered roots,
Mine eyeballs blind themselves with fiery tears
Of love for Rome; my life would withered be
With all the curses breathing forth, aflame
With hate for Appius! Oh, ye gods! in what
Have we outraged you that we now are cursed
With such a blight as Famine never cast
Over the fields of plenty, withering
Alike the grain and the wild wayside bloom,
Sweeping across the vast, bright lands of peace,
And leaving staring Ruin in its way?
Oh! Rome, thou much-wronged child of Romulus,
That I might break the seals from off thine eyes,
And place a flaming sword within thy hand,
A watchword in thine ear—"Endure for her
Who is thy rightful mistress, Liberty."
A battle-cry upon thy glowing lips,
"Onward!" A prayer within thy mighty heart,
And prophecy to stir thy godlike soul
To action. But the times are ripening! [A pause.
Could I relate thy wrongs, I would not cease,
Nor spare myself, but speaking, sink to earth,
Worn with the task. Yet who can number them
That are as numberless as Heaven's stars?
I say, as I have said to you before,
We Romans will again secede, again
March, in a body, to the Sacred Mount,
And threaten as of old another Rome,
A nobler Rome, a Rome unbound and free,
To found thereon, or else a revolution,

VIRGINIA

Bloody and merciless and full of horrors,
Shall ravage Rome, but we be satisfied.
The fire and the sword hath ready tongues;
They fawn not to the great, nor spare the high,
They lick and bite nor fail in eloquence.
So, to the fire and the sword must we
Resort; for city, home, and cherished ones
Demand that guilty blood, as a libation,
Be poured in answer to the blood of Rome,
Which crieth to her children from the ground!

[*Exeunt.*

VIRGINIA

ACT II.

SCENE I—THE HOUSE OF APPIUS.

The curtain, rising, discovers a bondmaid in the center of a spacious court, filling her pitcher at the fountain. It is midday, and the light streams down from above, flooding the entire space with radiance. The woman sings in an undertone, as she turns to water the roses twined around the columns in the back-ground. Enter Marcus Claudius. He approaches the maiden, leisurely.

Marc. Ah! pretty one! Fortune has favored me!
I enter in due time to proffer aid.

Slave. Nay, shame on thee, a man free-born, to thus
Address a bondmaid, when there is no need.

Marc. Thy humble mien is fitting, girl, but I
Am modest, and, thus far, will graciously
Demean myself.

Slave. Demean thyself, indeed!
I only mocked thee, fool; thy proffered aid
I scorn. Low-born plebeian, who art thou,
To set thyself above a child of kings?

Marc. (angrily). Ha! Have a care! Take heed!
Thy saucy tongue
Eludes thee, mischief hungry. Fairest slave,
But for that very fairness which is thine,
I'd have thee lashed by him who favors me!

Slave (wheeling about in scorn). Who shelters, who
supports, who uses thee,

VIRGINIA

And for his own vile ends! Lends thee his brains,
His power and knowledge for thy petty, sly
Returns. He, fierce and false; thou, mean and small;
He, merciless; thou, only Marcus' friend—
And both unscrupulous as Mercury.

Marc. (furiously). Thou art too scathing in thy
judgment, damsel!

Slave. Nay, I am mild to what thou dost deserve.

Marc. How darest thou, a slave, to judge me so?

Slave. King Tarquin, called Superbus, or the Proud,
He was mine ancestor. And I, alone
Left of his line, in bondage languish. *Thou,—*
What canst thou boast of? Of the blood of plebs,
Yet lower e'en than they who gave thee birth;
Despised of all, for thou art neither slave,
Nor free; thou hangest slothlike on the skirts
Of mighty men, that they may represent
Thy cause—support, succor, and plead for thee,
In gratitude for thy poor services.
Avaunt! Fawner and client, touch me not!

*[She spurns him when he would approach
her, and haughtily departs.]*

Marc. (gazing after her). Adieu, thou helpless
scorner, chained despiser,

Thy tongue hath sought to whip me sore—in vain.
A client knows not shame nor injured pride,
Nor is he haughty, for the blood of kings
Heats not his veins. So Marcus, too, is low,
Ready to stoop to aught, however base,
To gain his ends. But triumph over triumphs!
Marcus will issue forth the conqueror,
Flushed with his victory, while other men
Lie low and bite the dust because they clung
To honor! He, clean void of conscience, sucks

VIRGINIA

The sweets of life down to their sweetest dregs. [*Pauses.*
Ha! who is that? My master hath returned!

[*Peers through a curtained doorway on the right. As he retreats, Appius Claudius enters hurriedly. His toga is disordered, his countenance aflame with wine and passion. He throws himself heavily upon a couch.*

Appius. Wine, fetch some wine! At once, with no delay!

Marc. (aside). And drunk as Bacchus at his wedding-feast!

(*Aloud.*) Which kind, my lord?

Appius. Falernian! Mark ye, dilute it not!

Marc. (aside). I need no prophet's eyes to see his end.
To Bacchus I assign him with due care. [*Exit.*

Appius (in hoarse undertone). I looked but once,
and, looking, she was gone,

Leaving me reeling, drunk with loveliness.

I have imbibed deeply this day in wine,

Yet hath it less intoxicating power

Than hath a tremor of her lashes or

A flutter of her garments! I am struck,

And heavily! [*He groans and clasps his head with his hands.*

Virginia! Elements

Are in thy name—tempest and burning flame!

My soul is tossed as though it were at sea,

My brain is floating on the vacant air,

My heart consumed in everlasting fire!

[*Enter Marcus, bearing a goblet and an amphora.*

Marc. Thy rare Falernian.

Appius. Fill me the cup. [*Drinks.*

VIRGINIA

Sweet solace and indulgence of the gods,
Unequaled nectar, give me satisfaction!
Better to me this pleasure than the sight
Of fair Elysium. Such ecstasy
As is the privilege and portion of
Souls freed from Hades and its rack and wheel
And snatched to Heaven, can no sweeter be
Than is mine ecstasy, when wafted on
The summer zephyr, comes this breath, divine,
Of nectar and ambrosia in one.
Virginia, to myself, to thee, to Love,
I drink! And now, my Marcus, sit thee down!
I would confer with thee.

Marc. (seats himself). What is thy will?

Appius. Marcus, this morn I made my way in state
Through Rome—and, in the market-place, beheld
A sight that hath undone me for this day.
My heart hath slipped its leash and now is set
Hard on the trail, not to be turned aside.

Marc. What vision hath the gods vouchsafed thee,
then?

Appius. 'Twas more than vision, thanks to Vulcan be,
Who did create that mortal styled a woman,
At once a snare, at once a perfect boon;
At once a curse, at once a lasting blessing.
It was a maid, a lowly, mortal maid,
A maid of mean plebeian birth as well,
Yet beautiful as though she had arisen
From out the golden heart of some fair rose,
Or drowsy, dreamy, tempting, fresh and fair,
Had issued, shyly, from the troubled depths
Of rock-bound spring, a nymph but newly born,
And shrinking from the glances of the morn.
Virginia, child of one Virginius,

VIRGINIA

Centurion of courage and renown,
She burst upon me like a revelation
Unto a prophet. She is mine as sure
As are the stars possessions of the Night.
She'll have no will but mine, no choice but mine;
She'll yield her body unto me, until
I find the chance to win her heart and soul.
I'll hold her and I'll kiss her heart away;
I'll chain her soul to mine with links of gold.
But whether she shall ever love me true
I little care, so that her lips are mine,
So that I daily touch her hands and feel
Her dusky hair blow cloudlike 'gainst my cheek.
Marcus, thou art the man to work my weal,
By aiding me in this, mine enterprise.

Marc. What! Shall I play the game and thou receive
The winnings?

Appius (haughtily). Ay, assuredly. O, pause,
And pausing, see thyself in honest light.
Thou art my client; thou to *me* dost owe
Thy safety, standing, possibly thy life.
I know the law—I *made* the law, the while
Thou canst not read a letter; as a pleb
Few rights are thine—those few I gave thy class
At the expense of the patrician favor.
Break with me, and thou'lt break thy fortunes, ope
Thy chest of troubles, like the silly maid
Who brought untold misfortunes on herself
And on the world. Assist me and thou'lt gain
My favor, keep my needful, strong protection.

Marc. Enough! I follow thee and will obey.

Appius. E'en to the letter?

Marc. To the letter, lord.

VIRGINIA

Appius. Then hearken. Choose some morning, soon
or late,

And hasten to the market-place. The maid
Receiveth schooling there. When she appears,
Spring forward boldly, seize her by the arm,
(And yet be not too rude in thy demeanor);
When all the multitude around demand
An explanation, say to them that she
Was born of a slave-woman in thy house,
Ere thou a client had become. And add
That she had been in secret borne away,
And, by the wife of one Virginius,
Claimed as a child; her own at birth had died,
And he, Virginius, kept in ignorance,
Grossly deceived, believeth it his flesh
And blood. The tale is wild; no proof hast thou,
Nor witnesses; and yet it is enough
Seeing that I control the Romans as
The Fates control the lives of mortal men,
And need the barest shadow of excuse
To work my will—I, who am autocrat!
Assume a righteous air, if that doth lie
Within the limits of thy doubtful, rare
Accomplishments. When they protest, then say
“To Appius for justice I will go,”
And leave the rest to me.

Marcus. Ay, leave to thee
The cowing of the Roman mob, for that
Lieth within the limits of *thy* rare,
Doubtful accomplishments. So let it be.
I'll serve thee well—will my returns be worthy
The peril of my venture?

Appius. Also leave
That matter unto me.

VIRGINIA

SCENE II—WOMEN'S APARTMENTS IN THE HOUSE OF
VIRGINIUS.

Style of ornaments and hangings very simple. Virginia, bending over her nurse, who is seated in a chair, appears to have just completed the arrangement of the latter's hair.

Virg. Nay, now, let be! 'Tis most becoming so.
What! would'st thou call't presumptuous to assume
The style of headdress worn by noble ladies?
Foolish Camilla! Thou art nobler far
Than many score fine dames, however high
They hold their heads or wear their tresses—so!
Oh, 'tis entrancing! Stay, I have not done.

Camilla (groaning in mock despair). Alack! was
ever nurse so harried by
A maid as silly and as sweet as thou!

Virg. No, never! for I'm sweet because I've kissed
Thy kind old cheek so oft and have imbibed
Therefrom the sweetness only found in thee.
And I am silly—I suppose, because
The gods have made me so. Now, turn about
Thy head. How white thy hair of late hath grown!

Camilla. Alack! mine age is on me!

Virg. (*passionately caressing her*). Nay, not so!
Or if 'tis so, I love each silver thread.
Kiss me, Camilla—but I must proceed
With this thy toilet. Now is it complete.
Oh, Jupiter! it is a work of art!
Sweet nurse, thou wilt amaze my father when
He catches sight of thee. [*Seizes a mirror.*

Come, view thyself.

'Tis not ill-done, for I have marked the style.

VIRGINIA

Shake not thy head at me, I prithee now.
I only sport with thee. Look not so grave.

Camilla. Sweet one, because thou art so gay to-day,
I fear to-morrow thou wilt be in tears.
Excess of spirits bears excess of grief.
Thou'rt young and fair as Hero; but to her
Misfortune came and loss and heavy woe!

Virg. Now, thou remindest me of Wisdom's owl—
Croak not so somberly. Thou who art one
Whose heart is ever genial with mirth,
Wrong'st Nature to cast shadows over youth.

Camilla (*drawing Virginia to her tenderly*). My
little love, I would not seem to sigh;
Ever have I despised a sorry face,
A gloomy or foreboding disposition.
Thou hast most aptly said that I to-day
Belle my character. Forgive! Forget!

Virg. (*pouting*). Forget, thou croaking raven of
despair?
Thou dost expect too much. I may forgive,
But not forget. What ailest thee to-day?
Art thou not ill or weary with thy tasks?
We'll make thy labor lighter, and thy cares
As to the household now shall rest on me.

Camilla. Not so, sweet child. There is no need for
that.
I am not ill nor weary, nay, nor sad,
But fearful and in dread of hidden woe.
What may the morrow bring to thee, my babe,
Or to thy father, or thy lover? What,
I can not see, but only feel and dread.

Virg. Camilla! Something surely ails thee now.
Oh! I am mystified and overcome
By thy prophetic words, thy drear address,

VIRGINIA

And I would probe thy meaning deeply, lest
A vision should have warned thee of a flood
Of coming tribulation. Gentle nurse,
Hast visited of late the oracle?
Speak! Speak to me! Speak to Virginia! Say!
Tell me, nor torture me upon the rack
Of fear and dread prolonged.

Camilla (slowly). If it were aught
That I might put to thee or e'en myself
In syllables, I'd speak. But syllables
Are clumsy things. Words are inanimate,
Dull, helpless weapons, powerless unless
The thoughts are present skillfully to wield
The blades. Then cut and thrust they mightily,
Ready to wound, or e'en with menace kill.
I know not what I fear. I know not why
Nor wherefore. Has the gift of second-sight
Been by the gods this day on me bestowed? [*A pause.*
I seem to see great sorrow brought about
By shameless wrong; I seem to see a cloud,
Laden with anguish which may soon descend
In burning drops on Rome, where'er I turn.
Who are the victims I can not discover,
But when I close mine eyes from out the black
That blinds them, lo! a knife like lightning sent
By Jove flashes upon me—and is gone!

Virg. (sobbing). Alas! My joy is fled and all is
gloom.
Sure 'tis some peril scowling o'er my father.
Mayhap e'en now he lieth in the camp,
Struck down by men who envy him his fame!
Oh! horrid thought! most dread, most cruel thought!
Camilla (arousing herself with effort). Nay, weep
not, my Virginia; I regret

VIRGINIA

Those vague emotions which are doubtless false
Deceiving dreams, sent me by Mercury,
Who oft delights in filling mortal minds
With gray forebodings, as thou art aware.
Quick! Kiss me, child, and dry those silly tears.
Lo! now methinks I hear thy father's step.

Virg. (joyously). Father! mine own dear father!

(Voice of Virginius without.) Little one!

No welcome at the door?

*[Virginia runs to the curtained doorway,
through which her father enters, and
flings her arms in tearful ecstasy around
his neck.]*

Virginius. What! tears, dear heart?

Virg. But smiles will clear them soon. I feared
for thee—

Most foolishly, yet ne'ertheless, I feared.

Virginius. Most foolishly, indeed, my dark-haired
Psyche,

Thou pure-embodied soul, my spirit's light.

Look up, dear child, and kiss thy father fond.

He's wearied and he needs his heart's restorer.

*[The two come forward, he in his shining
armor, she nestling birdlike in the shel-
ter of his arm.]*

My daughter, I have seen Icilius.

Virg. Ah! Father!

Virginius (mockingly). "Ah! Father!" Ay, I
saw him. Me he held

Firmly, besieging me with queries, all

Concerning thee. How had Virginia fared

While he was absent?—the presumptuous boy!

Couldst thou fare otherwise than well with me?

And then with eager eyes he questioned as

VIRGINIA

To thy remarks, thy thoughts concerning him,
Thy attitude to things in general.
Where did Virginia spend her days? In school?
Was she by chance affrighted at the state
Of Rome since he had left her? Like unto
A feverish flame, he reached on every side,
Hungry for news of his Virginia.

Virg. (dreamily). My Love! My Love! Mine own
Icilius!

Oh! gentle gods, my happiness exceeds
My worth. But yet, amen! So let it be. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III—A GARDEN OVERGROWN WITH ROSES.

Enter Virginia and Icilius. Twilight deepening into night.

Icilius. This is an eve of witchery, an hour
Alluring, swelled with love and weighted down
With dreams.

Virg. A time when all our best ideals
Are perfected. Reality is dead,
Deep-buried in her grave, and Heaven and Earth,
Swayed by the wand of sweet Imagination,
Languish beneath the velvet robes of Night.

Icilius. And 'tis a night more fair than when Dian
Cast lustre on the young, unwitting face
Of that deep-slumbering boy, Endymion.

Virg. Oh! happy boy! a goddess kissed thy hair,
Mused o'er thy brows, and sighed above thy lips.

Icilius. Thrice happy man, who treasures human
love,
And humbly may accept that precious gift,

VIRGINIA

A mortal maiden's heart, nor sigh for more.
There is no more, nor anything so fair,
As such a dear possession. Happy he,
Who can, though but one instant, close and warm,
Hold woman's form, or kiss the starry light
Into her eyes, the blood into her cheeks!
And such a man, Virginia, am I.

Virg. (shyly). Not once in life, dear Love, but
many times.

Icilius. Not once, not twice, not thrice, but many
times.

Virg. What might lies in the warmth of kisses given!
Like wine they strengthen, quicken, stimulate,
Like flame they warm, like moonlight satisfy,
Like stars uplift above the common world.
Dear Love, I am a weak and fearful child
And need my wine, my flame, my moon and stars,
To fit me for the years that lie ahead.

Icilius. Thou lookest pale, in need of stimulant—
[*Kisses her.*]

Once more, sweetheart! Nay, wouldst thou draw away?

Virg. Not so. Mine ears deceived me, hearing
sounds

Of stealthy listeners.

Icilius. Virginia,
Rest here upon this bed of roses. They
Are "red with anguish for Adonis' death,"
That mortal love of Venus. Dear, recline,
And let thy tresses, darker than the night,
In the breeze fluttering, caress my cheek,
Breathing thy love for me.

Virg. Icilius,
'Twas only yestereve I wandered here.
The sun was casting forth his fading beams

VIRGINIA

In final efforts most supreme; my thoughts
Were full of peace and thee. And in the light
Shed by the homing sun—the purple, red,
And gold—I dreamed fair dreams, imagined visions.
Methought I saw the coming years of bliss,
Deepened with sorrow, lined with simple care;
The sorrow of a mortal, and the care
Of wife and mother. Then, at once, arose
Longings that I might always worthy be,
As was Eurydice of Orpheus.
Never to falter, howsoe'er I feared,
Turn not, stay not, fail not; a woman in
My services and steadfast faith, as well
As my most passionate love. My thoughts are grave;
Perchance they do accord not with thy mood?

Icilius. Not so, thou spirit of sweet harmony,
My life and soul, my one bright guiding star.
Thy lover is a rude and careless man,
A Roman tribune, weighted with affairs,
Stern to my fellows, tender but to thee.
Yet when I look on thy beloved form
And perfect face, my sins are swept away,
As is the unclean wrack, upon the shore,
Swept by the ocean. Ay! and in its place
Are left pure pearls and shells and wonders such
As only dwell where man can never go—
Thy thoughts, Virginia, pure as virgin snow.

Virg. Last night I lay awake amid the dark,
Hearing the music of the fount without
My window; sharply, trebly sweet it broke
The heavy, voiceless gloom of slumbering
Nature and sleeping men. Awake, I dreamed
Of all the bliss the gentle gods have placed
Within my hold. Then, like a swelling sea,

VIRGINIA

High in my bosom rose the newborn love.
I thought of how it grew, so shy, so slow,
At first like faltering breeze that lightly stirs
And lifts the tiny feather o'er the heart
Of nesting bird, then gaining courage, grows
Into a gentle wind until the soul
Within leaps up, and mighty, strong, and free,
Soars on celestial wings above the raving sea.

[*A silence falls, during which a light begins to break in the eastern sky.*

Icilius. We have outsigned the day; the rising moon
Her benediction smiles upon this spot,
Where breathes and hopes and loves Virginia.

Virg. She signals faintly, from the brightening east,
To thee, my hero and my love.

Icilius. One kiss,
One kiss in honor of fair Cynthia.
May blessings come to thee with every ray
From yonder orb which rises o'er the hills
Of Rome and lights a glory in thy hair.
Elusive soul! this moment dost thou seem
A chaste, pale spirit of the lonely moon,
A white Diana of nocturnal glades,
Yet in the magic of the ardent sun
I've seen thee flame into an Aphrodite,
A glowing type of passion and desire.
My love, my full and perfected ideal,
My Helen and my delicate Ænone,
My nymph and my incomparable queen
In one. Come closer to my arms, beloved!
I would not lose in any sense or thought
A moment spent with thee, Virginia.

Virg. (in his arms). Closer, ay, closer, as the days
go by,

VIRGINIA

Deeper and deeper, stronger and more strong,
Each in the other till we are not two,
A man and maid, but one, but one. Oh! say
How close I am to thee, Icilius?

Icilius. As close as vein to leaf, or leaf to stem;
As close as is the rose-flush in the heart
Of ocean's shell unto the shell itself;
Close as the star is to its atmosphere;
Wedded as day and night, no break, no void
Between, but only faintest change and lights,
Born of a higher world, a purer sphere,
Heaven-conceived, begotten of the sky.

*[The light visibly brightens, shining down
upon the two. After a silence they stir
and slowly walk apart, watching the
sky. Icilius presently rejoins Virginia.]*

Love, thou art weary. Come within and sleep.

Virg. Nay, I could never weary in thy sight.
Have I not called thy kisses and embrace
My wine, my flame, my moonlight and my stars?
I am not weary. But I'll come within—
The morrow brings a fresh Elysium.

Icilius. Oh! but the night is fair; behold each rose,
How tenderly preserves and cups its dew,
Barely awakened, lifting up its head
And smiling at the moon. One kiss before
We go within. And now, farewell, thou rose;
Farewell, thou garden of nocturnal dreams
And noon-day musings. Come, Virginia,
Let us within.

VIRGINIA

SCENE IV—HOME OF CORNELIA.

Apartment spacious and luxurious, with hangings of various kinds. Cornelia, who is reclining in an arm chair, occupies the center of the room; a female stands behind her in the act of arranging her hair. On the left is a boy in rich patrician dress, seated beside an oblong bath, engaged in sailing a tiny fleet of vessels on the surface of the water. On the right are a number of attendants, conversing in undertones.

Cor. Ah, gods! I am most sad and most awearry
Of this routine of state, unrestful splendor.
My lovers love not me but my possessions,
My friends are envious of my delights.
Wretched aristocrats! Unhappy we
Who call ourselves patricians, and who swear
Our race is blessed of the most blessed gods!
Say rather cursed, and with a heavy curse!
How can I give my heart to those who are
By *noble* blood worthy and eligible,
After the Roman laws, to sue for it?
Eros with them is but an empty name;
Passion and lust and horrible ambition
Form the emotions of these "blessed" ones.
And I, unhappy, love with pure desire
Sicinius, a soldier and a pleb!
Yet hath the Ten forbidden intermarriage,
Just when those bars of difference were about
To fall away and Heaven ope for me. [*To the attendant.*
Sufficient, Julia.

Julia. Nay, a few light touches
And thou wilt shine more fair, my lovely mistress,
Than heavenly Venus in her myrtle bower.

VIRGINIA

Cor. (smilingly). But I am dark as night; she as
the day,
Thou foolish maid.

Julia. Believe me, thou in thy
Rich, languid charm would cast enchantment o'er
Adonis, as would keep him from the chase
Where Venus pled in vain.

Cor. Tut, flatterer!

Julia (slyly). Methinks I'd make a model lover then
If I do flatter. Is't not so, sweet lady?

Cor. (bitterly). Lovers are mockeries in this black-
ened age.

A maid may wed the low-souled fool so long
As he's high-born! The man of noble mind
Is numbered, if a common, 'mongst the dead.

Julia (idly). Methinks Sicinius comes here anon?

Cor. (in displeasure). What! Insolent! Who bade
thee speak, I pray?

Julia (softly). Lady, mine eyes are clear and quick
to see,

And thy heart's sentinels are slumbering.

I mean no insolence, by all the gods!

My motive only love and sympathy.

I, too, am a plebeian, and rejoice

To see thy gracious, noble condescension.

Yet in my joy I well could weep with pain,

Seeing the darkness of thy doubtful future.

Cor. Darkness! It is a void as empty as
My heart this day is full. Begone, I pray,
Each one of you; nay, thou, my Julia, stay
And bid the bards perform a soothing lay.

[*Exeunt maids. Sounds of a harp without
in soft accompaniment.*

VIRGINIA

Cor. Tiberius, come hither unto me.

[*The boy approaches her.*]

Now kiss me, child, and talk a space with me.

Tib. What melancholy broods upon thy brow,
Curves thy dear lips, and glooms within thine eyes?

Cor. Brother, thou art too young to comprehend.

Tib. Mayhap, for I am only twelve years old;
Yet I'm no dullard, sister, and I weep
Because I see thee sad. Methinks Sicinius
Would weep for thee as well.

Cor. (*starting in dismay*). Ye gods of love!
Does all Italia observe my heart,
Which I had deemed secure within my breast?
Or possibly (although the gods forbid!)
My maidens have been gossiping to thee?

Tib. (*disdainfully*). No, never; gossip reacheth not
mine ears.

But oft I hear thee sigh and then, within
The selfsame breath, breathe forth a name I know;
A name all Romans know—Sicinius.
Ay, and I oft have heard thee sob, although
I fain had heard it not, since thou desirest
Thy grief held secret. Sister mine, how canst
Thou hope to wed a soldier and a pleb?

Cor. Alas! Alas! Mine own Tiberius!
No hope have I, and yet I love my strength
Away—my heart and soul are all aflame
With a wild conflagration. Boy, thou seemest
Inclined to comprehend my fierce emotions,
Bitter despair and strange besieging hope,
That scarce is conscious hope, but mocked and crushed
By the stern laws of Rome and tyranny
Of the false Ten, since ever it was born.

VIRGINIA

Thy bright brown eyes are luminous with soul;
Wise, gentle brother, dost thou weep for me?

Tib. (sobbing passionately). A curse upon those
false and dreadful Ten!

Cornelia, would that I might succor thee!

Cor. Most dear, my brother, weep no more for me;
The gods, who love true lovers, do despise
Tyrants and murderers, and sure will aid
Our cause if we be patient to the end.
Time is a greybeard, and he will not haste
At any whim, and Fate, a bigot stern,
Who acts according to his quick desire;
He preys on Innocence as well as Guilt,
And none can change the fashion of his ways. [*A pause.*
Now, tell me, wast thou playing mariner,
But now, and was yon bath a mighty sea?

Tib. (brightly). I was Æneas, our great forefather,
And I was sailing from our ancient Troy.
Oft Juno dashed our ships against the rocks
In spite, because the Trojans she abhorred;
Yet, by a miracle, lo! I was saved.

Cor. And didst thou then encounter and escape
Scylla's dread arms, Charybdis' frightful jaws?

Tib. Ay, and therefrom lost I three goodly men—
Two oarsmen and my helmsman.

Cor. Cruel fate!
Perchance thou hast survived these perils, so
Thou mayst give comfort to thy troubled sister.
Methinks—but what familiar sound is that?
Surely his voice dismissing his attendant—
And now a knocking on the outer door!

The porter cometh nigh. Tiberius,
'Tis he! I dreamed not he could come this day!

Tib. Then I'll begone, sister; give me a kiss;
I'll seek thee later and relate my voyage. [*Exit.*

VIRGINIA

Cor. Ah! gods! I feel as fluttered as a maid
Of the plebeians might. Thus do I share
The simple nature of his simple class,
Through my deep love for him. My haughty mien,
Patrician dignity, desert me when
Mine own beloved cometh unto me.

(*Voice of porter without.*) Most gracious mistress,
I await thy pleasure,
To usher in a visitor to thee.

Cor. (*aside*). I must not seem too eager, compre-
hensive,
Lest e'en my faithful porter, noting it,
Let slip without my doors some foolish scandal.
[*To porter.*

Who is the visitor?

Porter. Sicinius.

Cor. Admit Sicinius into my presence.

[*Enter Sicinius and porter.*

(*Aside.*) Dear Heaven! My Love! (*Aloud.*) Thou
Gaius, to thy post
Begone! And Julia, do thou too withdraw.

[*Exeunt the two. A silence falls. Cornelia remains seated, a still form, most beautiful, endeavoring to calm her loving passion, one hand upon her bosom and her eyes fixed on the face of Sicinius, who stands motionless with admiration.*

Sicinius!

Sic. What can I say, oh, God!
Thou art too fair, thou art too wondrous fair
For me to break the spell. Awake! Awake!

VIRGINIA

Dreamer I am not wont to be, save when
Thy beauty casts a web of visions o'er me.

Cor. My beauty paleth in the greater light,
O my Sicinius, of thy manhood's worth.
Awake, indeed, and greet me. I can face
Thy gaze no longer; art thou turned to stone?

Sic. (advancing, with his arm outstretched in a sudden warmth of passion). I turn to stone
only upon the day

When I can neither claim nor clasp my love.
Till then mine arms continue flesh and blood,
My lips as warm as thine, thou radiant Soul!

(Embracing her.)

Cor. Oh! stay a space! Is every curtain drawn?

Sic. I do not know, for thou hast dazzled quite
My goodly eyesight, and I only see
Cornelia here and there and everywhere.

Cor. Alas! I fear so greatly for our love;
Pray Heaven thou lose me not entirely!

Sic. Nay, rest thee, rest thee, tremble not, beloved.
The life of Appius will soon be spanned,
And a great wave of revolution shake
Rome's center; soon I drop a mighty pebble
On her dark surface, and the rings therefrom
Into a rush of water thence shall widen.

Cor. (partly rising from her chair, her eyes alight).
The Fates be thanked that now the foul stagnation
Of Rome, enslaved, is stirring into life;
And *thine* the hand! Thou'rt worthy of the cause,
Thou patriot and model of a man!

Sic. Oh! but I love my city and my race!
Thank God that my stern duty lieth on
The selfsame path as love for thee, my sweet.
My conscience and my happiness alike

VIRGINIA

Demand that I should aim to liberate
Rome and the Romans from the yoke of men
Who are defiling and defiled—the Ten!

[Starts suddenly.

I came, that I might steal one glimpse of thee.
The sun is high—I may not tarry more.

Cor. So soon departing? Whither wouldst thou go?

Sic. Straight to the Forum—then unto the camp.
The movements of our foemen, the Sabines,
Are grave. Methinks I'll soon be called upon
To enter into active services.

Farewell, Cornelia! kiss me once again!
Sweet mistress, noble lady! fare thee well!

[Exit swiftly.

Cor. Gone! Gone! So swiftly, like an eager shaft
From Roman bow. Vanished, my gallant love!
Where shall I see him when he doth return
To me? May Mars attend and favor him,
And Victory with laurel wreath adorn
His earnest brows. Sicinius, farewell!

VIRGINIA

ACT III.

SCENE I—A CLOUDY MORNING IN THE FORUM.

44

Busy passing to and fro of citizens. Enter Cornelia and Tiberius, attended by two slaves. The former appears embarrassed, fluttered, and distressed, the latter troubled and concerned.

Cor. Gods! How the people stare upon me, brother!
Alas! They reckon not of a woman's heart,
But judge me bold and courting their attention,
I who am hungry for one gaze alone,
Yet can not find. So many days have passed,
No tidings from my love hath reached mine ears,
And rumors that he's dead hath driven me
Close unto madness. All my slaves have sought,
But failed to find him. I am desperate!
Surely the ears of one who loves will hear,
Surely the eyes of one who loves will see,
And learn his fate, whether for good or ill.
He will forgive me for exposing her
He loveth to the gaze of multitudes!

Tib. Ay, but most likely he was called to serve
Rome in the latest skirmish with her foes.
Thy fear it is unfounded.

Cor. Nay, my child,
The skirmishing they say is discontinued,
And all who fought therein returned unto
The camp, save only those who fell beneath

VIRGINIA

The Sabine spears. My Love hath not been seen,
And I can rest no longer in my house.

[While they speak, the already clouded sky darkens so rapidly that all start and look out across the populated hills. A distant peal of thunder is heard, followed by a second, greater in volume. All press together, then a cry arises: "Way, make way! The sibyl of the vale would speak! She is inspired!" The dense crowd parts and all swing backward in confusion. A flash of lightning breaks the heavy gloom, followed by a muttering of thunder. A few large raindrops fall. The sibyl enters through the multitude, a weird, mad form, with tossing hair and wild, disheveled garments.]

Sibyl. Wail, walls of Rome, and weep, ye tender vales
Of sweet Italia!

[A murmur and a swaying. Voices contend for silence.]

Oh! day of dole!

Oh, day of perfect woe! Oh, Furies' day
Of fever and of tears! Oh, black despair!
The night of tyranny hath settled o'er
Our city, roof-like shuts her from the air
Of Heaven! And the hollow, brazen dome
Of despotism closes o'er our heads;
Black tyranny and red-hot despotism!
Had I hands long enough and nails as sharp
As Hate, I'd tear in shreds the infernal web!

[Another peal of thunder resounds. She points toward the heavy clouds.]

VIRGINIA

My tongue is laden with the vast commands
Of Jove, to-day. But Rome is deaf and mad.
The gods cry out upon this tyranny,
The heavens in thunder clap their wrathful hands!
Yet Rome, the Rome of Romulus, the Rome
Of Numa and the martial kings of old,
Is deaf—is deaf and mad! Oh! woe, woe, woe!

[*With a prolonged, shrill wail of despair
she vanishes amid the crowd. Great
agitation now displayed by the ma-
jority of citizens. Enter a runner.*

Run. Ye men of Rome, I bear ill news with me!

The Cit. What is't? Out with it! Dally not at all!

Run. Sicinius, our leader, he is dead!

[*A murmur of horror.*

Cor. (*starting wildly forward*). Sicinius? Sicinius,
the pleb?

Oh! gods of Heaven! Ye have struck me hard!

[*She sinks insensible upon the ground.
Her slaves bend over her. Tiberius
kneels beside her, sobbing bitterly.*

The Cit. How died he?

Run. It is said by some that he,
Being sent by the Decemvirs to select
A spot most suitable whereon to camp,
Fell into ambuscade and died along
With several comrades.

The Cit. Slaughtered by the foe?

Run. So it hath been reported by the few
That did escape. [*He pauses, then proceeds.*

But hearken, citizens!

The bodies lay unspoil'd, with faces turned
All toward one—that one, Sicinius.
The Ten hath hated and hath feared this man!

VIRGINIA

No more. Construe the meaning as ye list;
I must away.

[*Exit runner. The four citizens, Horatius, Galba, Marius, and Hortensius, approach the prone form of Cornelia.*]

Hor. A lady of patrician birth! Good slaves,
Can we assist thy mistress, who appears
In such a piteous and hapless plight?

Slave (sobbing). Alas! Alas! I know not what
to do,

Or what hath come upon her suddenly.

Ah! see, she stirs! Lady, awake! awake!

Cor. (opening her eyes, but making no attempt to raise herself). Those words he used when
last he came to me.

Oh! bitter, bitter fate! Say not awake,
But sleep eternally! Sicinius!

Galba. It doth appear affection did exist
Betwixt Rome's great plebeian and this lady.

Tib. Ay, sir, she loved him e'en as he loved her;
But naught was said because they feared the Ten.
Nay, I was wrong! Sicinius and fear
Are alien the one unto the other!

But rather did he bide his time until
These men should be o'erthrown and Rome be freed
From their most hateful laws and government.

One of the multitude. Hark to the boy! He is a
demagogue.

Another. Nay, he is innocent, and therefore bold,
Parroting sentiments that are not his own.

A third. And yet he speaks the truth, the naked
truth.

See how this woman hath been sadly wronged,
And how her life is marred by these Decemvirs;

VIRGINIA

For surely they gave orders for the death
Of him who was a leader and a man!
Have they not feared him for these many months,
Because his tongue is sharper than a sword?
And these two, a patrician and a pleb,
Each representing classes now united
By common misery, are foully hurt,
And scarred by fierce injustice from the Ten.
Vengeance! The time is ripe for vengeance. Rome
Can bear no more. Sicinius is dead!

[*Murmurs of "Sicinius is dead!"*]

Cor. (moaning as in pain). Sicinius is dead!
Sicinius!

[*Enter Virginia, followed by Camilla.
She espies Cornelia and at once approaches.*]

Vir. Kind citizens, let me to her, I pray.

[*She kneels beside the fainting girl.*]

Oh, tearful sight! Ah me, most sorrowful!
Thou art Cornelia, whom I oft have seen,
Of whom I've heard from thy dear lover's lips.
I knew him well; he waits for thee beyond
The sea, in the broad Islands of the Blest,
Where heroes find a haven and a rest.

[*She smooths the other's brow in silence
for a space, and then proceeds.*]

Look up, poor broken spirit, and discern
A friendly face and weep upon my heart.
She will not rouse herself! Good people, pray,
Press not upon her. Bring a car, O slave,
The lady is unable to return
On foot. The carriage waits without the place?
'Tis well. And now to bring her to herself!
Cornelia, waken! But look not so cold.

VIRGINIA

Thou gentle heart! relieve the strain of grief
With tears of passion. Then come home, come home.

Cor. (rousing herself). Tell me, who art thou, O
thou noble maid?

Virg. I am Virginia, whom thou knowest not.

Cor. Canst thou not take me from this staring crowd?
Their eyes are knives; the very air is poison.
Oh, God! He is not dead?

Virg. (assisting her to her feet). Come home, sweet
sister.

Tib. (sobbing). Cornelia, my Cornelia! Speak to me!

Virg. Art thou Tiberius, thou tender child?
Weep not; assist me with thy stricken sister.

[As the three, the slaves in close attendance, are about to make their way through the multitude, there comes a sudden disturbance, and Marcus Claudius springs forward.]

Marc. Ho! stay a bit, my servant; stay with me!

[He seizes rude hold on Virginia, who shrieks aloud in terror. At once the four citizens make their way to her side.]

Now by the gods! I only take mine own.

Virg. Aid me, in Heaven's name, ye citizens!
Deliver me from shame! Icilius!

Icilius, my love, where art thou now?

Marc. (in undertone). Thy struggles, maid, succeed
in binding thee

But closer in mine arms. Hast thou a lover?
He hears thee not, and thou art my possession.
Now, still thyself. Gods! Proserpine, thou art
As strong as is Cybele's lioness!

Marius. Foul slave! Loose thou the maid! Oh,
insolence!

VIRGINIA

Hor. Beast! I will kill thee, maim thee like a dog,
Unless thou takest thy hand from off the maid!

Marc. (panting). Reserve thy threats and play thou
warily,
Justice upholds me!

The multitude. Justice!

Marc. (coolly). Shout less loud,
Look not aghast, my masters. I will take
This girl by law—she is my rightful slave.

Hor. 'Tis false!

Marc. Soft, friend, be calm, hold off, I pray!
Hark! she was born a slave within my house,
And thence was stolen and declared to be
The offspring of the man Virginius,
Whose wife had borne an infant at the time,
Which on the moment of its birth had died.
Virginius himself was then away,
And on returning deemed it was his babe,
And deems so to this day. I waited long,
And now have found in this Virginia
My property. A woman hath confessed;
The one who stole her thence and fled away,
Returning but to die within the house
Of Appius, my patron, whom I serve.

Cam. Oh, liar! I first clasped her in mine arms
When she was born! Remove thine impious hand!
In childhood and in girlhood I have watched
Her growth, and guarded her from shame or harm.

Multitude. Ay, ay! She speaks the truth! Loose
thou the maid!

She is no slave. We know Virginius.

Marc. Now, I'll have justice, though it cost me e'en
My life, itself.

VIRGINIA

Hor. Which it is like to, dog!

*[He strikes him boldly with clenched fist.
The client staggers, losing his hold on
Virginia, who takes refuge with the
three citizens.]*

Hortensius. Where is thine evidence?

Galba (ironically). Ay, e'en thy word
Weighs naught with us free citizens of Rome.

Marc. (hissing between his teeth). My word shall
weigh with you, ye coward curs!
For lo! My word is—Appius! Ah—so!

*[The mob shrinks backward at the name,
and Marcus laughs in scorn.]*

(Vindictively.) I see it hath a little weight with you?
“Free citizens of Rome!” Ye make me laugh.

Oh! ay, I know ye'd mob me joyously,
Stone me, or cast me from Tarpeian Rock,
Save that—save that—ye dare not! Appius
Would leave not one small particle of this,
His client, unavenged. Back, all of you!
The maid is mine! Ye can not say me nay.

One of the multitude. But if we threaten thee, or
bear her off,
And save her from thy most illegal movements,
What then?

Marc. What then? To Appius Claudius
For justice I would go!

*[Murmurs of fear are heard on every side.
(With mocking smile). Lo! now he comes
Within the Forum.]*

*[Even as he speaks the Chief of the Decem-
virs enters. He is seated in a chair
which is borne by four slaves.]*

VIRGINIA

Appius (*frowning sombrely*). What bodes this tumult? Who, yon lovely girl?

Multitude. Justice! We would see justice, Appius!

Appius. Silence! and let me hear one voice alone.

Marcus, my client, speak, for I would have
An explanation of this strange disturbance.

Marc. Most noble Appius, I owned this girl,
Born in my house full sixteen years ago,
Of my slave-woman.

Cam. (*boldly*). Liar! All men know
Her mother was free-born and wedded to
Virginius, centurion and pleb.

Appius. Gag yonder hag, or drag her hence—I'll have
No withered woman's voice of spite exclaiming.

Cam. Thy licitor shall not lay his hands upon me!
My place is here. My voice shall speak for her,
Nor fear thee, king of tyrants and despoilers!
Long have I inwardly foreseen this day,
And prayed the gods to change the hand of Fate.
It seems my prayers are valueless. But still,
Still there does yet remain to me—my *curse!*
And all shall feel its potency who dare
To lay a finger on Virginia.

[*She faces Marcus Claudius with her arm
extended and her manner menacing.*]

Thou, fool of fools, who ventured to pollute
The purest virgin breathing in this land,
Because thou placed thy hand upon her flesh,
Which is as perfect as her perfect soul,
I curse thee—ay, and with a heavy curse,
For that which thou hast done! Thy misery
Shall soon exceed even thy trespasses,
Which in themselves are countless as the stars.

VIRGINIA

Be cursed, and live accursed and die accursed!
And be my witnesses, O, all ye gods!

[She turns toward Appius—her attitude becomes calm and majestic.]

And as for thee—I fear thee not. My curse
Shall rest on thee according to thine actions.
This much I have to say—thy tyranny
And rule of blood is waning to its close.
Beware, nor haste thy doom before its time.

Marc. (trembling). Seize on her, some of you, for
she is mad.

One of the multitude. Nay, she is gifted with strange
prophecy.

She voices Jove.

*[A tumult now arises in the background.
Icilius springs forward with a cry.]*

Icilius. Virginia! Turn to me!

*[He faces Marcus Claudius, and with one
blow strikes him down, then clasps
Virginia in his arms.]*

Virginia (sobbing wildly). And hast thou come at
last?

Icilius (tenderly to her). Courage, dear heart!

[To Appius.]

Now, as a free-born Roman, I demand
An explanation and a satisfaction!

[To Marcus, who essays to speak.]

Silence, thou hound, ere I forget myself
And murder thee! Thine answer, Appius?

Appius. Lictor, part thou the twain.

Icilius. Thou canst not, lictor!

In common manhood and as her betrothed,
Thus do I hold to her against the world.

Appius. Then, lictor, strike!

VIRGINIA

Virginia. Now, intervene, ye gods!
Icilius, my love! Oh! men of Rome,
Have ye indeed forgot Lucretia?

*[Swaying of the multitude. Appius
Claudius rises in his car.]*

Appius. Be prudent, ye who do desire to see
Full justice. We must hark to every plea,
And will to-morrow judge the case. Till then,
Thou, Marcus, guard the maiden, since the man
Virginius is absent from the town.

*[A hissing protest from the multitude and
a cry from Virginia follows this
announcement. Icilius faces the Chief
Decemvir with blazing eyes, and draws
Virginia closer.]*

Icilius. Over my body only shall yon hound
Of Hell seize on her. I am yet a man
With strength to shield or life to sacrifice
For that which is mine own. Sleep 'neath his roof?
I'd sooner see her cold upon her bier,
Or bound upon the wheel of Ixion,
Enduring tortures of the damned themselves!
With him? I'd rather cast her to a wolf,
Who, merciful, would tear her into shreds
And leave her pure, or o'er Tarpeia's Rock,
And with mine eyes behold her perfect form
Shattered upon the kindly stones below,
Ere Marcus Claudius lay hands on her.

Marius. Ay, he is right; the maiden yet is free.
The charge hath not been proven, Appius!

Appius. So be it. We will acquiesce thus far,
But lictors must be stationed as a guard
About the house wherein she spends the night,
Lest she escape and law be unfulfilled.

VIRGINIA

Cor. (coming forward). I will go thither and attend
this night
Upon her. Thou, Tiberius, return
Home with the slaves. To-morrow meet me here.

Slave. Lady, thy lips are white and thou art ill.
See, thou dost tremble.

Cor. Woman, what of that?
How canst thou weigh my pallor with her pain—
The anguish in her eyes? What though I shake
As with an ague? She herself is turned
To stone with horror deeper than mine own.
A living sorrow doth exceed a dead;
Death to dishonor seemeth merciful.
Her blow is heavy with the weight of dread,
Mine light with hope. Did she not succor me?
How can I fail her in her time of need?

Appius. Lictors, take into custody yon man,
Lest he do mischief.

Icilius. By the almighty gods!
Unhand me! I will kill thee, as a man
Would kill a beast. Ah! foulest trick to seize
Upon me from the rear. Oh, God! Oh, God!

[He sinks helpless upon the stones at Virginia's feet, two lictors binding him firmly with cords. The storm now breaks, shrieking in maddest fury, the lightning playing over the hills of Rome.]

VIRGINIA

SCENE II—A CHAMBER IN THE HOME OF VIRGINIUS.

Midnight and darkness, save where the moonlight shimmers through the columns on the left. Virginia is discovered kneeling in the sea of radiance as though in prayer. A silence follows the rise of the curtain; then, low at first, but louder, clearer, gradually increasing in volume, a hymn breaks from her lips, she kneeling still.

HYMN TO DIANA.

O, thou virgin-goddess fair,
Look upon me in my sorrow;
Hear, oh, hear mine earnest prayer!
Guard me from the fatal morrow!
Purity is in thy breast
With thy silver moonbeams drest.

Still my cheek is hot with shame,
And my heart in anguish crying;
Let me keep my spotless name,
Waking, sleeping, living, dying!
Chaste Dian, thy stainless glory
Still resounds in song and story.

Mount thy car within the blue,
Waft a whisper to me only!
Thou a heart hast, strong and true,
Think upon the maiden lonely.
Without thee it now would seem
Love were nothing but a dream.

[Cornelia suddenly appears from out the gloom behind and puts her arms about Virginia's neck.]

VIRGINIA

Cor. Love but a dream? Ah, no! The gods forfend!

Virginia. Ah! Thou! [*Turns and embraces her.*]

Cor. No other than this broken heart;

Yet is my soul untouched by human woe,
As thine shall be untouched by human sin.

Virginia. I see the face, with passion fiery,
The full voluptuous lips and greedy eyes,
I see and shudder.

Cor. Marcus Claudius?

Virginia. Nay, but the other.

Cor. I am mystified.

Virginia. None saw as I saw! He alone I fear,
Who on the morrow will decide, dear God!—
For Marcus—yet not Marcus—but himself;
Allot me as his own. (*Wildly.*) I saw his look,
And felt his power! Marcus is the paw
Wherewith great Appius will seize his prey.
(*Laughs.*) Virginia, his prey! He leered on me,
And in the whitening of his clenched hand
I marked the clash and clangor of his soul.
Dear gods! The feet of Night are leaden shod,
And yet the precious moments speed too fast.
Oh, Death! had I the courage that thou dost
Demand, I'd summon thee. Methinks I hear
E'en now the distant rustle of thy wings.
And yet—thou tarriest—thou tarriest.

Cor. Would Death might choose me out as willing
prey!

Virginia. Dear one, thy voice is weary like the world,
Which is so old and heavy with its years;
And yet thine eyes are bright, undimmed by tears.

Cor. Bright with the pain that kills by slow degrees.
Ah! for Apollo's pestilential dart,

VIRGINIA

Or but to see the shears of Atropos
Flash in Diana's beams.

Virginia (softly). We loved her light,
Thou—thou and I, when love was all in life,
And those, our own, the twain, Icilius
And brave Sicinius—"Ah, God! Ah, God!"
Thus cried he, my beloved, as he sank
Prone at my feet, a tyrant's prisoner.

*[Breaks from Cornelia's grasp and glides
in anguish to the curtained doorway
on the right.]*

Icilius! Icilius! Come to me!

[Enter a lictor—she shrinks back terrified.]

Lictor. Lady, I must exhort thee to be prudent;
Such cries will but confine thee e'en more strait
Than thou art now confined. Silence is best.
So ordered Appius, our gracious lord. *[Exit lictor.]*

Virginia (sobbing softly). I will be still! But I
am so afraid,

I, innocent, know nothing of the world.
Life-bondage? Nay, methinks I am but mad.
Severed from *him!* Ah! lay me in my grave,
Rather than have my heart torn from my breast.

[Music is distantly heard.]

Oh! If to pass in moonbeams from this life
Mid the pure notes of music stealing on
Into my brain and sinking in my breast,
Enveloping my soul; or to the sound
Of rushing wind—that music of the gods
Swept by Apollo's hand, or harking to
The distant murmur of the restless sea,
Striking its pearly harp of mystic sounds,
Echoed within the caves where maidens dwell,
Nereides and Oceanides,

VIRGINIA

With faces like the sheen of moonbeams, forms
Like the white foam their sire, Neptune, makes
When angered, with his trident! If to sleep,
Sleeping, to dream, and dreaming, live again
The years that now lie white upon their bier.

[*The moon vanishes behind a cloud.*]

Ah, me! I am so utterly alone!
The moon hath veiled herself, the silence drear
Knocks on my heart, unbidden enters in,
Where once love and sweet innocence, in peace
Dwelt, all unscarred by a despoiler's hand.
It is grown cold! What was that sound I heard?
I am so sunk in solitude, so wrapped
In vacant space, so chilled, I gasp for breath,
Like drowning mariner; but for a hand
Warm, loving, to uplift me from this death
Among the living, life among the dead!

Cor. Virginia! Weep or pray, but do not so!
Alas, Virginia, art thou turned to stone?

[*Virginia, all unhearing, turns once more
toward the columns where the moon
again shines through.*]

Virginia (singing).

“In the deep dream-light thy bark thou art guiding,
Shifting thy garments, the clouds, as a sail.
Rocked o’er celestial waves thou art riding,
Hiding thy features behind a light veil.

Dian, the spell of thy muteness cast o’er me,
Calm the wild tumult which wars in my brain,
E’er through my life may thine image, before me,
Shining and constant as ever remain.”

[*A silence falls. Virginia steals up to
Cornelia, who stands weeping alone.*]

My comfort hath not been denied me—see,

VIRGINIA

The moonbeams bear the message from the sky.
I hear a song which issues from the stars,
A song of love and hope for a reunion;
Re-born, we, who have loved and lost, shall live
Afar from sin amid the Blessed Isles,
And walk together, soul with soul, and heart
With heart; no drop of passionate blood shall be
Lost in our death, but we shall throb with love,
And laugh amid the light of suns to be.

[*A pause. Softly a dim gray light steals
through the columns; the moon is sink-
ing slowly. Cornelia turns in sudden
terror.*]

Farewell, immortal friend, go to thy rest;
Thy kindly watch is o'er.

Cor. Virginia, see!

Now dawns the cruel day when thou—when thou—
Ye gods have mercy on us twain this day!

[*Sobs wildly.*]

Virginia (pointing to the east). It steals with
faltering steps and blushing cheeks.

Call it not cruel; it has wept for me.

The dew is heavy.

(*Voice of lictor without.*) See, it is the dawn.
Look, comrades!

Virginia (starting as from out a dream).

Ah, Cornelia! Sure, I sleep.

Is this my father's house? This four-walled cell,
This prison, and am I Virginia?

Could it have been but yesterday I woke
Within this chamber from a happy dream.

I dreamed of *him*, my love, Icilius,
And woke still with his kiss upon my lips.

I can recall the flood of morning light,
A billowed sea of light upon the wall.

VIRGINIA

I watched the changing pools and shifting waves,
And smiled; the music of the fount without,
In rising cadence, played within mine ears,
And presently the stirring of the maids
And hum of spinning reached me and I rose,
Glad, with the day. And now—Cornelia, touch
My cheek lest I be vanishing to air;
Feel if my heart yet beats. Methinks I'm dead;
Even this moment but a roving ghost.

Cor. Courage, Virginia. Why, much hope is left!
To-day thy father will return, and he
Would place his soul in jeopardy for thee.

Virginia. Courage, ay, courage! I am brave again.
It is the dawn. Cornelia, we will seek
The outer court and wash our tears away
In the cool fountain. Once again my cheek
Is hot with spirit and my heart beats swift
With hope and newborn trust in those I love.

*[Exeunt the two, their arms wound round
each other and Cornelia's lips pressed
to Virginia's cheek.]*

SCENE III—THE FORUM.

A multitude has gathered. Appius is in the judgment seat, with Marcus Claudius stationed beside him. Many women are weeping and the men appear silent and angry. Appius is surrounded by a guard of lictors. Cornelia and Tiberius are seated on the left in a car drawn by slaves. Near the center are gathered Galba, Hortensius, Horatius, and Marius.

Marius. This vast suspense weighs on me heavily;
I would not see that gentle maiden wronged

VIRGINIA

For all my world possessions! E'en the gods
Would shriek with horror if yon slave of Dis,
Young Marcus Claudius, should seize on her.
Why doth she not appear?

Hort. She and her father,
Who hath returned, hot-foot, from camp to her,
Tarry about the town, and every man
They meet they do address with exhortations
And prayers for justice and for witnesses,
That this gross tale which men do know is false
Shall be so proven. Yet all Rome is prone
Beneath the foot of Appius and his nine
Vile colleagues. Fear is most tyrannical,
Justice is dying, Mercy now is dead.

Marius. Then God alone can help the wretched maid!

Hor. (hotly). Nay, shall she be defiled and made a
slave?

Not while my hands are free, my body quick
With lifeblood, and my heart a man's. Why she
Is pure and frail as is the mountain snow.
Happy the man who stands her champion.
Happy Icilius, our young tribune!

[Enter Virginius in mean, plebeian garments and Virginia simply clothed in white, her dark hair loose. A murmur of sympathy and admiration greet their appearance, quickly suppressed. Enter from the other side Icilius, vainly struggling in the hands of armored soldiers. His hair is wild and greatly disheveled, his features white and drawn with agony.]

VIRGINIA

Icilius. Virginia! Ah, my God! Virginia!

Virginia. My Love! My Love! My Love!

[He stretches out his bound arms toward her, and in a moment with a cry she runs to him, regardless of the gazing world, and kneeling at his feet kisses with fervor the hands in bondage for her sake. Murmurs from the multitude.]

Appius (rising to his feet, his face aflame). Back, girl! Back from him! Lictor, part the twain!

[Lictor unwillingly obeys, whereat Virginia rising slips away from him to her father's side. Virginius advances, with his hand uplifted, toward the judgment seat.]

Virginius. Delay no longer in the trial of
This matter. We demand in common justice
A hearing, and at once, O, Appius!

Galba (aside to his friends). Mark yonder man
upon the judgment-seat.

Methinks 'tis he who coveteth the virgin,
And Marcus but his instrument. Ah, see!
The Chief is moved to acquiesce. Methinks
He fears this pleb as he once feared Sicinius.

Appius (haughtily). And now begins the judgment.
Silence, all!

My client, Marcus Claudius, step forth.

[The man obeys. Virginia, shuddering, looks only at her father.]

Appius. Repeat thy statement, Claudius, we wait.

Marc. O, noble Chief, and all ye men of Rome,
I but reiterate my words to-day

VIRGINIA

Spoken in explanation of my course
Of action yesternoon. A woman came
Unto the house of Appius, one moon
Ago, and came to perish on our hands.
But ere she died she made a full confession
Of having served in early years the wife
Of this our citizen, Virginius,
Who ignorantly hath been foully wronged,
For whom we feel the deepest sympathy,
And unto whom I now address myself.

[Turns to Virginius.]

O, good centurion, this maid is not
Thy child in blood; but, as I said, was born
Of a slave woman in my house. Thy babe
Died on the moment of its birth. Thou wert
Away in service. Dost thou not recall?

Virginius (in calm affirmative). Yea, that I do
recall. (*Aside.*) Thou fiend of hell!

Marc. (triumphantly). Has he not said? This
slave, who did confess

To us the truth, declared that she had played
The thief and crept most slyly to my house,
Stolen the infant of my nurse and slipped
Out, 'mid the night and gloom, which, friendly, hid
Her dastard deed. Virginia is the babe,
And, therefore, lawfully belongs to me.

Icilius. Ye gods!

Multitude. No proofs? No evidence?

Marc. (proudly). My word!

[Much laughter and some hissing.]

Appius. Silence! Virginius, speak, and be as brief
As the occasion will allow. Proceed.

Virginius. Ye men of Rome! To you, and you alone,
I speak in my defense, for lo! in you

VIRGINIA

I see the qualities of common justice,
Or faintest sense of mercy, which is rare—
And less, indeed, unto the point in hand.
For all these forty years I've lived in Rome,
A Roman 'mongst the Romans, brave amongst
The brave, and serving, ere I came of age,
My mother city. Have I shown myself
In any manner base, corruptible,
Or lying, either by my word or deed?
Ye all are witnesses of me—each man
Can see and know the truth as God can see.
This is my babe, of me begotten, born
Of her whom I so loved—her mother. Lo!
The very luster of her ebon hair
Bespeaks the woman who in honor bore
Virginia. See! The tremble of her lip.
I do not willingly display my flesh
And blood to gaze of multitudes, but that
My straits are desperate. Look upon her hand—
The long, brown fingers are a copy true
Of these, though mine are knotted by the grip
Of sword and the guiding of the plow.
And now her eyes—Ah, no! I say too much.
Ye gods of Heaven speak for me this day!

[He bows his head upon Virginia's shoulder.]

Appius. He faints with sudden revelation from
The gods of what is manifestly true.
Virginius, thou art deluded, or
A man, of old, deceptive.

Virginia. 'Tis a lie!
He is Virginius, no more, no less!
And 'tis enough, as Rome can witness to.
Thou art not worthy to crawl on the ground
And kiss the hand which hath these many years

VIRGINIA

Battled for Rome! Thou canst but harm our flesh.
His name and mine are unstained as the flame
On Vesta's altar.

*[Turns to where Icilius is struggling vainly
in the hands of the guard.]*

Peace, Icilius!

Of what avail is aught to such as these?
Small hope is left—and yet, O, Appius,
Wert thou not born of woman? For the one
Who gave thee life, respect her sisters now.
Let mercy dawn within thy hardened breast,
Speak but one word—one word—and many lives
Will leap and live again. Look down upon
And honor this grey head, now bowed so low;
The only stay and comfort in his age
Wouldst tear from him? His years in solitude
Will roll away, a never-ending tide.
Ye Romans, look upon your citizens,
Protect your women—lest indignant Jove
Lightnings shall send upon you, or the shield
Of Mars be taken from its sanctuary.

*[Icilius at this moment breaks from the
grasp of the soldiers and leaps to Vir-
ginia's side. The girl lifts his bound
hands and places them against her
breast, raising her eyes to his.]*

Icilius! I heard a ringing laugh,
And saw, as in a vision, a young child—
Our flesh and blood—our souls' inheritor.
I saw adorning me, in the strange dream,
A wedding garland fresh, not clanging chains.
O, if to die within thine arms! But stay!
My father—see the workings of his face!

VIRGINIA

He suffers. Father, we shall meet again
In the Elysian fields, when I am free!

Appius. Fools! Cease your maudlin tragedy! Dis-
perse!

Come forward, slave, the judgment hath been passed.

Cor. (starting). The judgment, and so soon!

Tiberius (leaping from the car). It is not so!

Virginia, stay awhile!

Icilius (aside). Unbind my hands, Virginia!

Virginia. The knot is hard and I am dazed. I tremble.
Love, wilt thou sacrifice thy life for me?

Icilius. Ah! some one loose me of these cursed bonds!
[*He is seized by the soldiers and again
forced from the young girl's side. Cor-
nelia steps from her car, and coming
forward kneels at the feet of Appius.*

Cor. Lord Appius, behold a broken heart,
But one with gentle blood from noble veins
Forever fed. Though proud, I kneel to thee.
O, loose her bonds—restore her liberty—
And I my wealth, my house, and e'en my life
Shall give to thee or this thy servant here.
Deep down into the dust I do incline
Myself, who am a lady of the best
And noblest line in Rome. I offer thee
My services, if thou wilt free the maid
Who did befriend me in mine hour of need.

Virginia. Cornelia! To me! Nay, it shall not be!
Thou friend of friends, such sacrifice is vain.
One kiss alone I ask of thee—one kiss—
Then silence! See, Tiberius weeps for thee.

[*Tiberius springs with a cry into Cor-
nelia's arms. The two draw off
together. The four citizens come for-
ward.*

VIRGINIA

Galba. O, Appius, we offer thee our lives
To do with as thou wilt—but loose the maid!

Appius. Petitioners, ye gods, from every side?
It shall not be, for she is Marcus' slave.
The judgment has been passed, and I have spoken!

[*A murmuring.*

Make way! The master comes to take his slave!

[*Confusion. Appius rises, his face ablaze
with passion.*

Make way, ye fools! I'll call my colleagues here
With all their lictors. There will be bloodshed!
Make way!

Icilius. Ah! but to have my hands about
His throat, though for a moment, for a breath;
Though for a heart-beat and, beyond me, Hell!

Virginia (in a voice of agony). Father! My father!

Virginius. Quiet, little girl!

O, Appius, the final shred of hope,
The weakened flame, is gone—forever gone.
Before we part, indeed, one moment grant
To us aside, that I may speak with her.

Appius. Haste, then, old pleb! Nor tarry long for
tears.

Virginius. Tears? What are they? My heart is
dead and barren,

My soul athirst for death. Tears mean no more
To me than rain upon a broken stone.

[*He leads the girl aside. All watch in
breathless silence.*

Virginia. O, Heavenly Powers above, deliver me,
By whirlwind or by sword, from this dread place!
Father, farewell!

[*Presses his hand to her lips.*

Virginius. Ah! Touch it not!

[*Snatches a knife from a butcher.*

VIRGINIA

Thus only can I make thee free, my daughter!

[He plunges it into her bosom and she falls back into the arms of Icilius, who has freed himself and leaps to her side with a cry. Tumult and swaying of the crowd.]

(Brandishing knife.) With this blood, Appius! thy life and thee
Devote I to perdition!

[Makes his way with the knife through the multitude. Icilius lays her body down, murmuring, "Virginia, by thy blood shall Rome be free!"] *[Exit.]*

[Camilla kneels as though stunned beside the prostrate body.]

Tiberius. Ah me! Ah me! Virginia!

[Sinks beside her.]

(Curtain.)

It rises again to show the collected army, with Virginius and Icilius at the head. Appius is about to leave the seat, his cloak around his head. Several lictors have fallen to the ground. Camilla still kneels beside the body, gazing vacantly before her. Virginia's dark hair falls like a shroud around her.

(Curtain.)

POEMS

POEMS

STEWARDSHIP.

What can I do for Thee, Almighty God,
Whose breath can wake, whose voice can calm, the sea?
Should I endeavor, with this striving brain,
Which, in its striving, errs, and, erring, turns,
And, fearful, flies from its appointed field—
With these weak hands, that blindly grope along
The road of Truth to higher things, uplift
Those fallen by the way, whom Thou didst name
My brothers? I, to the sad, ancient world,
Speak, in unfaltering accents, of my soul's
Instinctive yearnings, loftiest ideals,
And holiest hopes of the fair destiny
Of all my fellow-souls, who tread the way?
When One has left a message, sweet, divine,
Eternal, for the fainting world to read,
Should I arise and cry, an echo faint,
Of His all-satisfying tones of Love,
And lisp my dreams of Truth? I am afraid!
Yet, trembling, still I dare not to be mute.
Remembering His vast Love, I can not choose
But humbly say the lessons I have learned.
Teach me, O God, to feel Thy silences,
And hear Thy voice aright, in wind and wave;
Teach me the upward look of Faith and Hope,
Which lifts, nor ever drags the spirit down;
Teach me the tender touch and the warm smile
Of a deep, all-embracing heart, whose light
Is the sweet essence of true Charity!

POEMS

THE SEA GULL.

Strong-winged soul of the lifting sea,
 Bird of the gale,
Launch thyself from the crags, and fly
Over the crested waves, nor sigh
 For the sheltered home, but gladly hail
The sea and the open sky!

High, low, high, low,
 Over the foam,
Gliding level with the mast,
Darting close above the vast
 Roll of billows—then come home,
And hide thee from the blast.

Once again, thy pinions free
 Spread to the speaking breeze!
Forward, like a mermaid light,
Onward, like to a soul as white
 As the curling foam of the singing seas,
Nor shrink from the coming night.

Rolling fog and fading light,
 Spread and sail!
Fold thy pinions, breast the deep,
In the darkness, Spirit, sleep,
 Soul of the gale!

POEMS

MT. VERNON.

Home of the Dead! One glance of lingering love
We cast behind us, where our vessel's wake
Winds, foaming, backward to Virginian hills.
Home of the Dead! Retreating from thy shores /
We breathe a final sigh, a last farewell.
The pillared mansion gleams amid the green,
The sombre tomb, deserted, stands alone;
While, over all, a thousand beacons burn.
The West displays a canopy of sky,
Woven by angels, flung across the hills,
Where sleeps the silent dust of Washington.

Bleak is the wind that leaps like blade unsheathed
From out the silver scabbard of the East!
At hide and seek, among the ruffled waves,
The eerie shadows play in elvish glee.
A thief, Night steals the golden glories bright
Of Day. But still a flush of silken rose
Colors the West, stains the broad river's breast,
And casts a garland 'cross the Eastern sky.

Behold, on either shore, reflected green,
Dim in the dying lustre of the sun,
While tips of rose, like diadems, adorn
And wreath the gracious brows of drowsy hills.
Behold and marvel! See and comprehend!
Amid this beauty lies the sacred dust
Of one who was a hero and a man,
While all the hills that sleep about his tomb
Shine with the glory of God's holy light.

POEMS

MY MOTHER.

Has she faded from my skies forevermore,
 Like a star that slides adown the arch of Night,
Or the sunlight, swiftly paling on the shore
 Of my boundless sea of hopes, that glittered bright
In the lustre of her smile? Is she gone forevermore?
Or has she but departed for a while?

Shall I never feel her hand upon my brow?
 Shall I never meet her lips in kisses sweet?
Or is it that I am denied her now,
 And some day shall hear the music of her feet,
And, like Proserpine, will come, with the happy winds
 that blow,
Leap the years, and find, in her, my final home?

THE CRADLE SONG.

Adown the vista of the years,
I turn and look with silent soul,
As though to catch a muted strain
Of melody, that seems to roll
In tender cadence to my ear.
But, as I wait with eyes that long
The singer to behold—it fades,
And silence ends the Cradle Song.

But when the shadows of the years
Have lengthened slowly to the West,
And once again I lay me down
To sleep, upon my mother's breast,
Then well I know I ne'er again
Shall cry to God, "How long? How long?"
For, to my soul, her voice will sing
A never-ending Cradle Song.

POEMS

OUT OF THE DARK.

Out of the Dark that shrouded Thee, my Lord,
Upon that day of Passion and of Pain,
There rose a cry from Thee which rent the sky,
Piercing the shadows of the noontide gloom
In vibrant tones that rang with agony
Supreme, and, with the strength of holy grief,
Divine despair, rolled upward on the wings
Of Mystery unto the eternal Throne—
“Eli! Eli! Lama Sabacthani!”

Out of the dark that lies about my soul,
Upon this day of sorrow and of pain,
I lift mine eyes and gaze with prayerful heart
Upon the tortured image of my Lord,
Then lo! the sombre shadows melt away,
And round my spirit glows a wonderous light,
By thine own Cross and Passion, blessed Lord,
And by that mystic moment of despair,
Thy world shall never know Thine awful Woe,
Nor cry to God in agony supreme—
“Eli! Eli! Lama Sabacthani!”

POEMS

NIOBE.

(Dedicated to the statue of Niobe, in the Uffizi Palace, Florence, Italy.)

Oh! form of perfect woe, in grief unending!

Soul-anguish, mortal pangs, in marble moulded!

Oh, sobs! by us unheard, that bosom rending!

Oh, tender form! within those arms enfolded!

With heart undaunted, has the Mother striven

Against Death's vengeance, e'en within its portal;

And when her soul with horror most is riven,

Woman, she dares to face the wrath immortal.

So, through the ages, see those forms united

In an eternal clasp. Ah, woe transcendent!

Upon that face, its beauty all unblighted,

We read the Mother-love, supreme, resplendent!

TO THE GENIUS OF DEATH, BY CANOVA.

Genius of Death! Thou form as white and slim

As moonbeams, falling through the awful dome

Above thee when the deathlike night draws down;

Speak, through those sweet, still lips, whose solemn
curve

Alone gives token of thine ancient, dread

Supremacy! Say that thou art not Death,

But holy Calm or silent hushed Repose.

Still are thy stern lips dumb, no hopeful breath

Exhaling! Then, from them, do I appeal

To something more divine. O'er that calm brow

And carven face, uplifted from the tomb

In speechless faith, there shines a wondrous light

That mocks the awful declaration there.

Genius of Death thou canst not be, for lo!

Thou art the Soul of Immortality!

POEMS

TO THE WINGED VICTORY OF SAMOTHRACE.

“Winged Victory?” Unworthy is that name,
Thou marble miracle of endless Time!
I see thee standing yonder in the light,
Upon thy rude and lonely pedestal,
A shape as strange as it is beautiful.
To me, thou art a wingéd mystery,
For where, in all the ages of the past,
Years of the present, centuries to come,
Can there be found creation like to thee,
Conceived by God or Man? A miracle;
Marble in motion—yet divinely still,
As though it paused to hear its own low breath—
Yet breathes not; pacing on its lonely height—
Yet stirs not; heavenly wings outspread, with chaste
Angelic curve—yet not in flight extended.
Thou art not of the living nor the dead.
Thy wings do breathe of immortality,
Of Heavenly Presence, yet thy headless form,
In all its marred and mutilated grace,
Points to the clay. How can we solve thee, then?
Enigma so profound was never known
Among the many countless works of Man.
Thou art incarnate Mystery itself,
Brooding above the world; the Universe
Lies in the shadow of thine outspread wings—
Thou silent Spirit of the Infinite!

POEMS

BEATRICE TRIUMPHANT.

(To Beatrice Cenci, as she is depicted in Guido Reni's painting of
St. Michael and the Dragon.)

Gold hair, blown back from radiant brow,
 Crowning, like light, a maiden, martyred head,
Feet planted on the "Dragon," prone,
 And mighty wings in victory outspread.
In thee what change, divinely wrought!
 What wondrous resurrection from the dead!

He lies, beneath thy righteous feet,
 Who, cruel craven, caused thee to be slain;
He writhes who let thee agonize,
 A captive and in undeservéd pain,
And crawls, in sight of all the world,
 Forever rendered loathsome by that stain!

And thou, bright dream of brooding light,
 With woman's face and angel's stature, thou
Exquisite seraph, fresh from God,
 Tell me, why wakes no awful vengeance now
On thy grave lips? Oh! Woman, wronged,
 Unfold the mystery of that calm brow!

THE CALL OF THE IRISH SEA.

Gray Irish Sea, wild Irish Sea,
That spreads so free, gray Irish Sea—
Your freedom mocks the shores you beat
With the booming tread of your angry feet;
The Celtic heart no longer sings
To the rhythmic rush of Freedom's wings!
Wild Irish Sea, gray Irish Sea,
Chant Freedom's dirge, wild Irish Sea!

POEMS

Gray Irish Sea, wild Irish Sea,
You call to me, gray Irish Sea,
I hear the harp-strings of the North,
And stirring bagpipes thrilling forth;
I dream the dreams of olden days,
I hear bold Ossian chant his lays!
Wild Irish Sea, gray Irish Sea,
You call to me, wild Irish Sea!

THE LION OF LUCERNE.

Hid in a hushed retreat, a lovely dell,
Where Mother Nature sings low lullabies,
And weaves her silence like a sacred spell,
Beneath the light of deep and tender skies,
In his lone agony the Lion lies.

Colossal creature of a sculptor's brain,
Are you the marble that you seem to be?
Inanimate, untouched by mortal pain?
Within that form, and yearning to be free,
Your soul must wrestle with Death's mystery!

There is a height Self-sacrifice may climb,
Nearer the throne of God than any star,
A height above the wasting tide of Time,
Beyond the din of Earth's discordant jar—
A height that untried souls scarce see afar.

On that great height the Lion of Lucerne,
With face half-human, with majestic brow,
Lies stretched. Oh, Love! that will forever burn
On Pain's dread altar, you alone can know
The glory and the recompense for Woe!

POEMS

SONNET TO NIAGARA FALLS.

As on the brink of that which men call Death,
Standing 'twixt Time and dread Eternity,
We pause to gaze with fear-suspended breath
On that abyss, whose depths we can not see,
So now, I stand, above thy thundering fall,
Thou Miracle, of marvels most supreme,
Who summons all the world, with trumpet call,
To adore the heavenly genius of thy stream!
In 'wilderer confusion, mad disdain
Of earthly trammels, earthly tyrannies,
Shrieking, like legions of damned souls in pain,
Roaring rebellion 'neath the silent skies,
Fearful as Death, still thou dost seem to cry,
"I am the symbol of Eternity!"

THE LOST HEART.

(A Rondeau.)

Where is my heart? Ah! Love, I dare not say,
I only know that it is hid away,
Somehow,—somewhere,—and somewhat restless there.
But safely hid away,—poor heart, somewhere.

I strive to call it back to me, but nay,—
That willful heart refuses to obey.
And do you ask, thus, in your sad, sweet way—
You, Love, who know so well its secret lair,
Where is my heart?

Alone, I wait and wonder, day by day,
At the poor, pulsing heart, that went astray,
Once, in the mazes of a woman's hair.
Could it forsake a labyrinth so fair?
No need for you to ask, for me to say—
Where is my heart?

POEMS

IS HE NOT MINE?

Is he not mine? Although he drift from me
Into the Ocean of the Far Away,
Across the tideless and the awful sea
Of Time, while I alone must mutely stay
Within the doorway of a darkened Day;
Although he shake the dust from his light feet,
Dust of my warm Heart's Garden, yet I hold,
My Love forever, radiant, complete.
He breathes upon me when spring buds unfold,
He smiles upon me from the roses' gold;
I hear him in the tender melody
Of mating bird; his laugh rings, glad and free,
In every breeze; like stars his dear eyes shine;
His spirit is a presence, half-divine,
Which clasps, enfolds my being like a sea!
Is he not mine?

TWO GIFTS.

She laughingly gave me a rose, one day,
And the thorns were sharp,—but the rose was red,
And fragrant and warm from the sun's bright ray,
So I clasped the rose, though my fingers bled,—
And it fluttered in petals away.

She mockingly offered her heart, one day,
And I clasped what she gave, though my own heart bled,
I gazed in her eyes, and her soft hair lay
On my lips, and I laughed,—though the heart was dead,
And crumbled to dust away!

POEMS

THE MOONFLOWER.

Earth star of the evening, full moon of the twilight,
Pale soul of the dusk, like a virgin in white,
With slow graceful motion, so stealthy, so silent,
She opens her heart to the kisses of night.

Chaste blossom, ah! thus, when my own Love approaches,
And bends o'er my spirit with fervor divine,
Thus would I lay bare, in unbounded devotion,
A heart pure and tender and fragrant as thine!

THREE KISSES.

A rampant wind, on a golden day,
Sported and played with a wild, wild rose,
He woke her soul from its mute repose,
He kissed the heart of the wild, wild rose,
And, kissing,—kissed her leaves away,—
And now the wind goes sighing.

Love won me, on a golden day,
He woke my soul, with a kiss sublime,
And the whole world vanished, and Death and Time
Seemed nought at the touch of that kiss sublime!
Love, kissing,—kissed my heart away,
And now Love goes rejoicing.

An Angel came, on pinions gray,
In his cold, white arms he clasped my Love!
Earth reeled, the sun went out above.
Oh! God! I saw Death kiss my Love,
And, kissing,—kiss his soul away—
And now my soul goes wailing!

POEMS

A SONG OF THE WEST.

Into the glowing West!
And lo! the vast and sunburnt plains unfold,
An endless, rippling, tideless sea of gold,
 Our own dear Mother's breast;
 The gaunt, the silent earth,
The bare, brown land without a single tree
Or blossom as a home for bird or bee,
 It lies, endures the dearth,
 And smiles in spite of thirst
And parched and craving lips. This is the best,
The better land, my own, my noble West.

Into the West!
Green, verdant with the strength of endless light,
Immortal sunlight, radiant and bright!
 Where man may work, may rest:
 This is my paradise,
A land of flowers and of singing seas,
Of hoary mountain tops and giant trees,
 Beneath vast arching skies,
 Skies that are eloquent
With sympathy and soft, and deep and true,
Gray only when we weary of the blue,
 Cloudless and all content.

Into the West!
That mother of great men who sing her praise,
Who marvel o'er her miracles and ways,
 As free and unsuppressed
 As ocean's roll.
Say, O, ye creatures of the further sea,
What know ye of her grace and melody,
 The grandeur of her soul?

POEMS

TO ESTHER.

As Night, before the dawn,
In starry splendor, seems to brood
Above the world, which waits the morn,
Yet worships Night in melancholy mood,
As Night, in whom a solemn passion lies,
So brood and beam my Esther's midnight eyes.

As sunlight on a rose
In flashing radiance seems to glow,
Warming the tender heart within,
To life and love; as early beams bestow
Upon that rose a soul which can beguile
A hundred hearts, so beams my Esther's smile.

As love-birds, in the Spring,
Sing on the sylvan boughs at noon,
And mating-calls in echoes ring,
Or oft at night they whisper to the moon;
As stream responds to stream with tender art,
So, to mine own, replieth Esther's heart.

As sea to distant sea,
In grand response to Passion's cry,
Declares its own vast mystery,
And answers wild entreaties with a sigh;
As waves to waves melodiously roll,
So sings to me forever—Esther's soul.

POEMS

THE THRUSH.

It was the Thrush,—it was the joyous Thrush,
Who, with his beauteous voice, the woods addressed!
He sank from heavens unseen, and in the hush
Of floating fragrance and soft-slumbering flowers,
Dozing beneath the spell of sun-bright hours,
His summer shower of song the glade's deep heart
caressed.

Bright, speckle-breasted, angel-throated bird!
He tilted on the hedge, and piped and wooed;
Now here a note, now there, so low 'twas heard,
Ofttimes, by one deep listening ear, one only,
The ear of Silence; he, her minstrel lonely.
Was it for her divine mute blessing that he sued?

How often I have watched him in the grass,
Familiar, small, erect, and bravely dressed
In spotted golden-brown; have seen him pass
Alertly to and fro, all blithely springing,
With elfin bounds; no longer wildly winging;
Content with Mother Earth, as though he loved her
breast.

Earth born, sky destined, living harp of song,
Beloved Thrush, pour forth your notes divine!
Whether to earth or heaven you most belong,
What the vast purpose of your melody,
Your mystic glory, your bright ecstasy,
I know not,—only this, your soul is sweet to mine.

POEMS

THE LIGHT OF THE STAR.

Dank were the grewsome alleys of the town,
Dingy the houses of the dreary street;
The very dogs reflected degradation,
Gaunt, wolfish; while God's flowers of creation,
Young children, lacking all that makes life sweet,
Through the foul-smelling night ran up and down.

Under a dull street light I watched them play,
Shrilling in high-pitched and unchildlike tones,
Daring the perils of the tainted city.
Then, in my heart, the horror and the pity
For human kind that in such blackness groans
Rose, and I could not drive the pall away.

Amid such concrete evils, inbred sin,
I, groping, questioned, could Christ's kingdom come,
By any means? How could he ever enter
At wealthy portals strong, where self is center,
Or at the darkened doors of spirits dumb,
Dulled by the ancient slums' unceasing din?

But, glancing upward, in my deep distress—
Myself so small an atom of my race—
I saw, above the dreadful hovels shining,
A single star. It seemed, my pain divining,
To answer from illimitable space,
And with its rays to sanctify and bless.

Witness it bore of Law by which worlds move,
Light of the Soul, the Everlasting Mind,
Which—in its compass Earth and Heaven holding—
Is ever like some shining scroll unfolding,
And will unfold with Time, till all mankind
Shall read Life's one solution, perfect Love.

POEMS

THE MESSAGE OF THE PINES.

Tall Southern pines, with hearts of mystic throbbing,
Stretch your restless, weary boughs across the sunset
sky,

Dark Southern pines, whose souls are ever sobbing,
I would roam through these dim aisles and learn the
music of your sigh.

Hark! the wail of hearts that can not weep!

Hush! the sigh of souls that long to sleep!

Tall Southern pines, I seek these silent places
Only in my memory—a memory beside me moves.

Dark Southern pines, I love your solemn spaces,
And there in spirit walk, and with her spirit seek the
quiet groves.

Hark! the moan of human hearts that yearn!

Hush! the plaint of dreams that would return!

Tall Southern pines, I wrong you in my sorrow.

Harps divine, you chant a dream not passed, but yet
to come!

Our two souls shall walk together, on some perfect
morrow,

And through the years remain together, when your
voices all are dumb.

Hark! her spirit whispers in the grove!

Hush! I feel the presence of my Love!

POEMS

THE LOST SUNBEAM.

Through fairy green of willows old,
Aslant the stately, virgin, cold
Form of the sycamore,
Where poplars laugh, where beeches pray,
Where breezes sigh, where streamlets sing,
And birds are ever caroling,
One morn, I saw a sunbeam stray;
This single, holy, radiant ray
On the wide earth had lost its way,
Escaped through Heaven's half-open door.

“Where will the sunbeam find its home?”
I idly wondered. “Will it roam
Until it makes its nest
Perhaps in some dear baby's hair?”
But no! a baby's tresses shine
With their own radiance divine—
The sun of Heaven is always there.
Or would it find a secret lair
In flowery heart? Nay, in that rare,
Deep cell, God's sun long found its rest.

So the lone sunbeam strays at will,
And longs for Heaven and rest, until
Into the silent grove,
An old man, crippled by disease,
Creeps down the path, with weary eyes,
That are too worn to seek the skies,
With palsied limbs and shaking knees,
And fixed, dull stare, that only sees
The stony ground. Oh! stately trees!
Shade this drear form with arms of love!

POEMS

As he pursues his lonely way
Through the green wood, the shining ray
 Straightway appears to dart
To that bent form, and seems to light
A glory in the thin white hair;
Then, restless still, it makes its lair
In the sad eyes, so dim of sight,
And, smiling through the sombre night,
It deeper sinks, a radiance bright,
And nestles in the old man's heart.

HERITAGE.

(To my Mother.)

Everything beautiful centered in you!
 All that is fair, in your spirit, my Sweet,
From the depths of the sea to the height of the blue,
 Lies now at my feet.

They are gems, they are gems you have scattered so free,
 From your zenith of thought they have fallen like
 rain,
From the height of your love they descended to me,
 In the midst of my pain!

Thoughts like the ocean and dreams like the morn,
 Pure and unsullied, most holy and true;
Dear Love, in my being there shines a new dawn,
 Whose light is from you!

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